

INUTILIZADO-Rendered Useless or ???

(The editor is not certain who sent in the following piece, but will be glad to give credit in the next issue if the writer will identify himself.)

The article in the November - December issue of the Bulletin on the 1901 stamp issue of Argentina with inverted center, and known only with the Perfin INUTILIZADO, offered a rough translation of the word as RENDERED USELESS, and concluded that this "...surely was another of philately's little ironic twists." While that may be the case, the use of the Perfin and its exact meaning should be further explained.

The word INUTILIZADO could more accurately be described as a precancel. In the latter decade of the 19th Century, the Argentine, being a very large country, had a very scattered population, with only Buenos Aires being a city of any size. Principal communication was by mail, and this included newspapers, most of which were in Buenos Aires, and which were sent in bulk through the posts. To reduce handling and the work load of the postal employees, in 1891 the post office began using perforating devices to precancel stamps for bulk mail users, much the same as printed precancels are prepared by the USPS today for bulk mailers. In the Argentine, these perforated precancels replaced date stamps. Entire sheets were perforated at a time and issued to the bulk mailers. A multiple without all stamps having a Perfin is a rarity. Since these were for bulk mailers, the majority of stamps with the Perfin precancels are high values, though they can be found on any Argentine stamp up to 1931, when the practice was discontinued.

The specific Perfin, INUTILIZADO, is listed as Type 5 in the Catalog of Official Perfins (Part II) by Mary E. Thornton. While Rendered Useless is the literal translation, the only part about these stamps that was useless was their use for other than the authorized purposes, which is the reason for a Perfin.

In addition to the work cited, other information is available in Bose's work on Argentine Perfins. Both are in the Club Library. A more detailed account can be found in the Catalogo de los Sellos Postales de la Republica Argentina, by Kneitschel, 1958.